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17 February 1953

MEMORANDUM OF RECORD

SUBJECT: Conversation held with Mr. Cromwell A. Riches, Executive Director of the Board of Examiners for the Foreign Service, Department of State, on 15 January 1953 by [REDACTED]

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1. Mr. Riches is a member of the Board of Examiners for the Foreign Service; he is also Executive Director of the Board of Examiners and is, in addition, a Deputy Examiner. [The Board of Examiners for the Foreign Service (Sec. 212 (a) Public Law 724, 79th Congress, as amended) "shall... under the general supervision of the Board of the Foreign Service, provide for and supervise the conduct of such examinations as may be given to candidates for appointment as Foreign Service officers".]
2. The Deputy Examiners are the only persons who actually conduct the oral examinations of Foreign Service Officer candidates. No other persons except Deputy Examiners are admitted to the oral examinations. The Deputy Examiners number thirty-five at present and are elected by the Board of Examiners. In conducting the elections of the Deputy Examiners, the Board of Examiners receives nominations, together with detailed biographical data, from those elements of the Government that are represented on the Board of the Foreign Service (e.g., State, Agriculture, Commerce and Labor) and elects the examiners on the bases of their qualifications and skill for oral interview and examination. Since examination is their sole function, this skill is the principal criterion on which the selection of the Deputy Examiners is based, although it is admitted that skill in oral examination is difficult to determine without seeing the individual in action. All Deputy Examiners are of Grade GS-15 or equivalent and above in order to insure a basic level of maturity. Their election is by secret ballot.
3. The same Panels of Deputy Examiners sit in oral examination for both junior and lateral entry candidates [Class 6 "junior" candidates - salary range \$3993 to \$5093; Class 5 to Class 1 "lateral entry" candidates - salary range \$5313 to \$14300]. It is argued that the traits of character and personality in which the Board is interested are the same no matter what level of entrant is being considered.
4. The examining workload for the present year is estimated to be 325 junior candidates of which about 200 can be accepted. Note that these candidates have already passed the written examinations and will have their

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physical examination when they report (at their own expense) for the oral examination. In addition enough examinations will be conducted to produce about 400 lateral entry officers (Class 5 to Class 1). Note that these candidates are for the most part already in Washington having been employed either departmentally (i.e., Civil Service) in the Department of State or as Foreign Service Staff Officers for the past three or four years. Written examinations are not required of lateral entry personnel. In summary, about 65% of the junior candidates are passed by the oral examination and about 40% of the lateral entry candidates.

5. Examinations heretofore have been held only in Washington although the Board has often considered journeying to the West Coast in order to ease the burden of cost to the candidate. There are many practical obstacles to so doing, however.

6. The Panels of Deputies - five per Panel - assemble every morning at 9:15 and complete their work by about 1:00 P.M. Mr. Riches chairs the Panels twice a week and his Deputy, a Foreign Service officer, Class 2, three times a week. Junior candidates and lateral entry candidates are considered on different days because the data and records are in different form. The individual Deputy Examiners, however, consider both types of candidates as the occasion arises. The oral examination of a junior candidate takes about one hour (three per morning) while the oral examination of a lateral entry candidate takes longer (two per morning). "Outside" Deputy Examiners (Agriculture, Labor and Commerce) are not expected to work on a Panel oftener than once a week. Before a Deputy Examiner is allowed to take part in the actual examination he is expected to audit six Panels in order to acquire the basis for oral examining skill and to provide for understanding and continuity of the process.

7. The Deputy Examiners come to the Panel without prior briefing and work from a sheaf of documentation that is provided to them. It takes one qualified analyst (GS-7) about a full day to prepare each case. Workload: 12 cases per week; 2-3 GS-7 analysts. It is important to note that Mr. Riches placed great stress on the fact that this documentation a) does not leave the office of the Board of Examiners, b) does not go into the general personnel files, c) is not available to any person except the Deputy Examiners on the Panel immediately concerned. For example, this documentation is not available even to the Director General of the Foreign Service.

8. After the oral examination, the candidate retires and the Panel discusses the case. For lateral entry candidates (Class 5 to Class 1), each Deputy Examiner then scores the candidate on a 1 to 5 grade for about eight factors. The composite score of 3.2 is considered to be "passing". If the

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score is high (say 4 or better) there is no further discussion. If the score is low (say 2.5 or less) there is no further discussion. If the score is medium (say 2.5 to 4) the case is rediscussed and the Examiners may change their scoring as a result of the discussion before another summation and average is struck. Changes tend to be down rather than up and the Panels tend to be "conservative" with respect to "suitability". The analysis and final result is dictated for the record on the spot.

9. The selection technique and scoring is the same for junior candidates (Class 6) but there are three grades of "passing", a) with distinction, b) passing, c) defer. These grades determine the place a candidate goes on the list, if there is a waiting list.

10. The vote of the Panel, the scoring, the score, etc., is concealed from the "outside world", i.e., from all persons except those present in the room. Only the result is announced. No pressure from "up the line" is ever made on the Panel to accept or reject a candidate. There has never been reconsideration of a case by the Panel (although this was suggested once about 5 years ago.) However, about 1945 the Director General of the Foreign Service struck from the list the name of a candidate before it was sent to the President. There was quite a row. All the Deputy Examiners resigned. As a result the Secretary of State instructed the Director General henceforth to forward the list without comment. It is extremely important to note that the appointing authority in the case of Foreign Service officers is the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate. Since 1945 the President and the Senate have always followed the recommendations of the Board of Examiners. It is recognized that both the President and the Senate have the right to act differently if they so choose. Note also that the Board of Examiners is not concerned with Foreign Service Staff Officers, Foreign Service Reserve Officers or Departmental personnel for which a different appointing authority exists.

11. Mr. Riches invited the undersigned to audit an examining Panel, subject to later confirmation, if that would be useful to CIA.

/s/ 

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